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Red Juveniles Too Busy for Trouble

(This is the third of a series of 12 articles by the author of America's most popular human relations column.)

By ANN LANDERS

MOSCOW—We call them juvenile delinquents. In Russia they are known as hooligans. They're bad news by any name.

It's extremely difficult to unearth information on the dimensions of Russia's juvenile problem. The new generation is the pride and joy of the USSR and the officials make every effort to preserve the illusion that Russian youth is 99.44 per cent pure.

There are no statistics published on hooliganism. Criminal activity of young people is seldom reported in the newspapers. The tourist guides hand out the tired, well-rehearsed line, "We have no problem with young people here."

I felt I could get the straight goods only from an American who spoke Russian and had been here for a while. Howard Sochurek, a Moscow-based Life photographer, arranged for me to meet Priscilla Johnson. Priscilla is a fine newspaperwoman (she works for North American Newspaper Alliance in Moscow). She also speaks first-rate Russian and is an expert on Soviet law.

PRISCILLA told me it is indeed true that juvenile delinquency is a lesser problem in Russia than in the United States — and she gave me the reasons.

From the age of 7 a Russian child is "controlled" by the state. The children are kept busy and hard at work, and most of them do not have the time, energy or inclination to get into trouble.

Russian children attend school from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. six days a week. Sunday is their day off. Schools close July 1 and open again Sept. 1. During the winter season the children have a two-week holiday. Co-education was abolished in 1943 but it was restored in 1955. The explanation: "Boys behave better when girls are

present."

ABOUT 80 PER CENT of the school children in Moscow come from families where both parents work. Hot lunches are served without cost, plus "all the milk you can drink." There is planned activity and extra tutoring until 6 p.m. for children who need additional help or "should be kept occupied for their own good." The device is designed to keep problem students in school until their parents come home from work.

Ten years of schooling is required for city children and seven years for those who live in the villages. If a student makes high marks and shows promise he may continue in a university or institute without cost.

The Russians are enormously proud of this. The first day I arrived in Moscow a waiter told me his son was studying to be an engineer. "Victor is in his fifth year at the university and it hasn't cost a kopeck. In fact, they pay HIM to study," he said proudly.

FRESHMEN who make good marks get a stipend of \$30 a month. A senior with exceptional marks will get as much as \$80 a month. If the parents have an especially low income he may get more.

Many students live in the university dormitories which are coeducational. I was told there is a traffic problem in the halls after midnight. "The authorities are aware of what goes on," a student said, "but nothing is done about it because they know it's impossible to control such things."

Russian girls do not begin to date until they are at least 16.



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MAKING FRIENDS . . . When she paused near her Moscow hotel to sample cherry-flavored fizz water, Ann Landers spotted 10-year-old Kova and offered her a glass of the soft drink. Kova's grandmother smilingly watched as the child accepted with a courteous, "Thank you, I would like it very much."

Judging from my Landers mail their American cousins are about two years' ahead of them. In Russia one does not see suggestive or provocative movies and ads. Perhaps this is why the young girls do not aspire to be "glamorous" or older than their years.

A high school girl who wears makeup is considered cheap. No "respectable" high school girl smokes cigarettes although some "nice" boys use tobacco in their senior year.

THE YOUNG people of Russia are considered the stars in her crown. Morals of Russia's teen-agers seem to be everybody's business. A motherly woman who boarded the subway just ahead of me seated herself beside a 17-year-old girl — a total stranger. I heard the woman say, "Young lady, your dress is not decent. You are not covered up enough in

front. Shame on you." The girl reddened and put on a sweater.

Very few teen-agers in Russia have access to cars. When they date they use the bus, subway or shoe-leather. In the winter ice-skating is a popular sport and most teens have "icedates." Most teen-agers do not have paying jobs as a rule because they devote out-of-school time to studying. This is considered more important than having spending money. Few teen-age boys can take a girl out to dinner. If they go to a concert, movie, symphony or any event which entails an admission fee, it is not uncommon for the girl to pay her own way.

Irena, a Russian girl of 18, asked me why in the world American teen-agers "go steady" when they are still in high school.

"This seems like such a foolish idea," Irena said. "After you are married you go steady whether you like it or not!"

WHEN I ASKED her how much she knew about American teen-agers she replied, "A good deal. They very often shoot their parents during arguments, kill themselves in fast cars and have gang fights."

"Do you think this is a fair picture of American teen-agers?"

She replied "We know this is not how they ALL behave. Some American teen-agers must be nice and practice the piano. Van Cliburn was here and he is an accomplished musician."

In 1958 the age of criminal responsibility was raised from 14 to 16. The most common types of lesser "crimes" (assault and battery, petty thievery and skipping school) are handled by the youth adviser or school headmaster. The more serious offenses are dealt with by the court.

THERE ARE two classes of hooligans in Russia — the "classless" country. The "Steelyagas" or narrow-trousered rowdies are zoot-suiters with Russian dressing. They wear ducktail haircuts and sponge-soled shoes. They hang around street corners at night, whistle at girls, smoke cigarettes and drink quantities of wine.

The Steelyagas are great fans of rock-and-roll music. (Some American records are available in Russia.) Elvis Pres-

ley is the Steelyagas' idol. When there is too much loud imitation of Presley in the public parks (many young men carry guitars and play them publicly) the militia hauls them in.

There is a shortage of police as there is of every type of worker in the Soviet Union. For this reason the authorities encourage "public justice." Small bands of private citizens (mostly students or young factory workers) are called the "Druzheyny." These unarmed volunteers patrol the street for signs of trouble and have the authority to take suspicious parties to the militia station.

PUNISHMENT IS almost always suspended for a first offense if the infraction is minor. A fourth offense can mean two years at a Siberian labor camp.

The other hooligan class — a higher caste — is called the "jet set." They are the delinquent children of the party leaders. These overprivileged sons and daughters of the Soviet brass, who are usually shielded from publicity and punishment, travel together and look for thrills.

THEY RACE their autos on the highways and get drunk on vodka and champagne. In order to get extra spending money they sometimes resell clothes and jewelry for profit, which is against the law.

In 1958 two sons of the minister of trade were arrested for "illegal selling." Garments were mentioned but those in the know whispered that more accurately the charge should have been white slavery. The case became so widely discussed it was reported in the newspapers. They got off with a light sentence.

When asked by my interpreter if juvenile delinquency is a problem in the United States I admitted it was. "I'm not surprised," she said. "Your television, radio, newspapers and small picture books (she meant comic books) are full of violence, shooting and killing. Your schools do not keep the youth busy enough. They have too much free time."

"AND HOW CAN your students be enthusiastic about education when the schools are in such bad condition that they frequently go up in flames?" "Where did you get such an idea?" I asked. "What flames?" "We read about the Chicago church school fire where 90 children were burned alive. Our newspapers keep us well informed."

"The future of the Soviet Union rests in the youth of our country. They appreciate the opportunity to get a first-class free education."

"RUSSIAN STUDENTS are not jitterbugging. They are hardworking and serious people. American teen-agers are spoiled and lazy. And worst of all, your capitalistic system has made it possible for almost every young person to drive an auto. THIS is the devil in the closet."

I had no answer. She had something.

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South High Educators Attend Area Meeting

Four South High educators attended meetings of the Los Angeles County Industrial Education Assn. last week at El Camino Junior College.

Principal John A. Lucas, Assistant Principal Willard Morgan, and teachers Paul Muller and R. William Derrickson attended the evening meetings. They heard J. Lyman Goldsmith, Los Angeles City Schools, declare that the social and technological advances of today make planning for future teaching needs very difficult.

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